

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING STUDY COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting of July 8, 2013

Members present: Jane Patton, Ann McCallum, Dan Gendron, Scott McGowan, John Notsley, Andy Hogeland

The meeting was called to order at 5:05

Ann McCallum moved, and Andy Hogeland seconded, the approval of the minutes of the June 25, 2013 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

The committee discussed their observations from the site visits of the Fire District Building and the Police Station facilities in Town Hall. Observations included that it seemed clear that both the fire and police were in need of new facilities, and that both had a long history of trying to carry out their functions in cramped quarters. As to the police station, additional concerns were expressed about the liability of the town in the case of an accident, and of the police being able to do their work properly.

Dan Gendron raised the issue of press releases, and the committee agreed that public outreach and periodic updates would be appropriate.

Andy Hogeland moved, and Ann McCallum seconded, a motion that the opinion of the Committee was that both the police and fire departments had a significant need for new facilities so they could properly carry out their respective missions. The motion passed unanimously.

The committee also agreed that at least one option should include consideration of a joint facility.

Ann McCallum and Scott McGowan had reviewed a draft schematic of a two-story police facility that had been prepared by Chief Kyle Johnson, indicating a building footprint of about 4,000 square feet. No decision was made on the merits of that schematic, but using it as a strawman proposal, Ms. McCallum developed a conceptual plan for overall site needs, including external parking, and concluded that a parcel of about 0.8 acres would be enough to satisfy this rough cut at police station needs in a free-standing facility.

She then transferred this draft layout to a sketch of the Fire District's proposed facility on the Lehovic property. John Notsley explained that the Fire District's consultant had indicated a need for about 1.8 acres, and it appeared that both facilities might fit on the front part of the Lehovic property, but there were still a number of variables to be resolved, including more specifics on the space needs of both organizations, building orientation, and on floodplain or wetlands limitations on the Lehovic property.

John Notsley reported that as soon as the signed sale contract was received from the seller of the Lehovic property, the site survey work for wetlands and flood plain delineations would begin. Completion of those surveys would help us determine the actual buildable area on the Lehovic property.

The committee discussed and confirmed that the Town police department and the Fire District are independent public entities, so each entity would have to have separate votes on any facility serving their respective needs. Residents of Williamstown are

automatically members of both entities, and can vote in the elections and annual meetings of both. This distinction does not seem to be widely known in town and Dan Gendron indicated this should be included in our outreach and educational efforts. The Village Ambulance service is a third distinct entity, which would also have to vote and approve any facility serving its needs.

The committee discussed the need to hire a consultant with public safety building design expertise. Jane Patton has initiated discussions with the Town Manager, Peter Fohlin, on commencing the RFP process for this support. Jane Patton and Scott McGowan agreed that it appeared the town might have approved a total of \$300,000 to pursue the design, etc of a police station, comprised of \$140,000 voted in the 2012 Town Meeting, and an additional \$160,000 in the 2013 Town Meeting.

Scott McGowan lead an overview of the sites that had been considered over the years for a new police station. Of this list, only seven seemed currently viable. The committee plans to discuss them in more detail in a subsequent meeting.

Andy Hogeland raised the question whether we should include the Village Ambulance service in our discussions, to see if they had an interest in looking at facilities. Scott McGowan indicated his understanding that the Village Ambulance did have a need for larger facilities, and, with the Committee's agreement, agreed to ask the ambulance service to join our next meeting.

Dan Gendron reminded the committee that he had circulated two spreadsheets that Town Hall had prepared. The first spreadsheet allows calculation of the costs of the several capital projects facing the town residents (police, fire, high school, library) and how these projects would affect tax bill for homeowners. The second spreadsheet shows what he called "the cost of generosity". This spreadsheet allows user to see what his or her tax rate (per thousand) would be when all landowners/non-profits paid, and when they did not. The tax rate falls to just over \$9 with full tax participation, as opposed to just over \$14 as it is now without further properties coming off tax rolls.

Scott McGowan indicated the police union was on record as supporting the location of a new facility on land adjacent to town hall, but would welcome a new facility at other suitable locations as well.

For the next meeting: Monday July 29, 2013 at 5 pm at Town Hall:

- Jane Patton agreed to see if the police department had any additional information on the building footprint it thought it would need;

- Jane Patton will contact Peter Fohlin to get more information on the RFP process for design services;

- Scott McGowan will invite the Village Ambulance to our next meeting; and

- Ann McCallum and John Notsley will work on getting information and site plans on the Lehovic property.

Ann McCallum moved, and Scott McGowan seconded, that we adjourn and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:43pm.

Submitted by Andrew S. Hogeland